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## Silicon Valley Trail Loop: Demonstrating the Potential to Reduce GHG

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The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council and the San Francisco Bay Trail Project are spearheading a study to demonstrate the potential of trails, alone and in concert with transit, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The study will examine factors that influence a voluntary mode shift to trail and trail/transit use, and will forecast emissions reductions based on scenarios that factor in a completed trail system, additional transit options that are integrated with trails, and the effects of programs and incentives that make trails a preferred travel mode. The goal is to ultimately promote alternative transportation options that offer community, environmental, and personal health benefits.

The project is led by a planning team that also includes the State Coastal Conservancy,<sup>1</sup> the City of San Jose, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, Santa Clara County Parks, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, and the National Park Service, Rivers Trails & Conservation Assistance program. Modeling expertise and research assistance comes from EcoShift Consulting and the Americorps Civic Spark program.

The project partners are looking to carry out this project by engaging others—experts from the policy, bicycle, government, academic, community, and business sectors. We want the results to provide additional data and momentum to support the platforms they're already working from to catalyze action (e.g., complete and interconnected trails, individuals using trails as a preferred transportation mode, policy and funding decisions that support better inclusion and development of active transportation, more livable communities, healthy lifestyle choices, etc.).

The Silicon Valley Trail Loop brings together sections of interconnected regional trail systems: the Bay Trail hugging the shoreline; the Ridge Trail (including the Penitencia Creek section) circling the ridges, but also looping into the downtown San Jose area; and the regional creek trails (including Guadalupe River and Coyote Creek) forming connecting spokes. The greater area linked by the Silicon Valley Trail Loop stretches from the Baylands of East Palo Alto around to Fremont and to downtown San José and the surrounding ridge lines. A section of the Ridge Trail will pass through the planned Berryessa BART station, and “Phase II” stations (Alum Rock, Downtown San Jose, Diridon, Santa Clara) will also intersect or be very near the loop alignment.

The project has two main components:

1. Analyze human behavior: **Understand effective strategies, programs, and incentives (e.g., reduced travel costs, convenience, improved health, a more pleasant commute) that encourage a voluntary mode shift to trails and transit**, no matter how frequent (i.e., a few days a week or month to regular and consistent use). A related objective is to understand the challenges that prevent bike usage, such as concern for safety, schedule, or lack of bike amenities/infrastructure.
2. **Forecast GHG emissions under various scenarios** (current status, completed trails loop, completed trails/transit network, and with incentives to support a voluntary mode shift).

**The intent is to then use the results to help catalyze actions based on results:**

- Develop or enhance mode shift programs or tools
- Connect and extend trails
- Provide quantifiable, supportable data to effect policy and funding decisions
- Support active transportation and sustainable community efforts;

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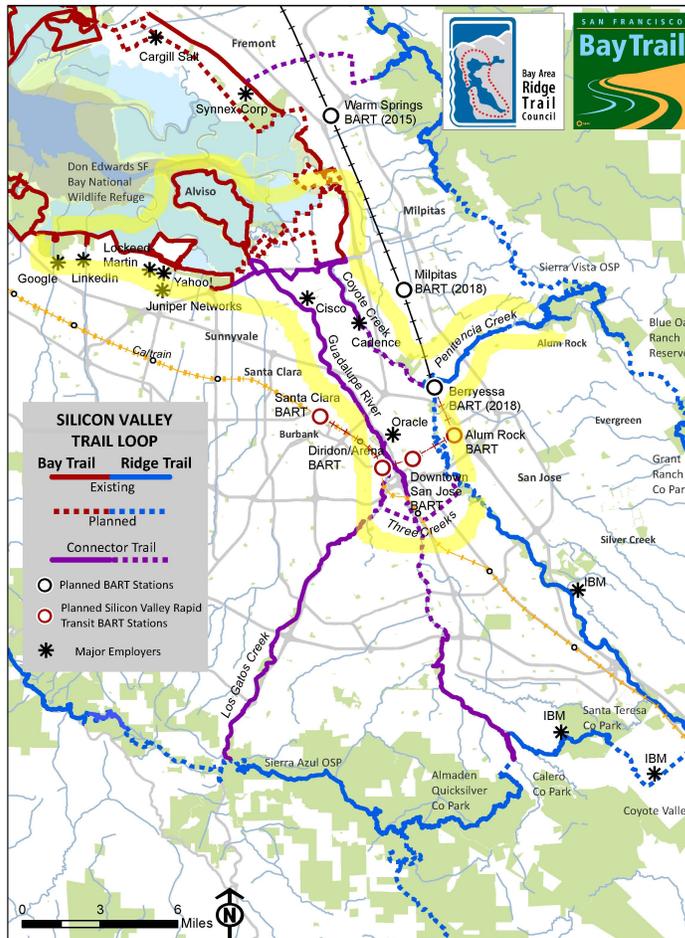
<sup>1</sup> Partial funding was awarded via a “Climate Ready” grant (<http://scc.ca.gov/category/climate-change/>) from the State Coastal Conservancy largely based on helping build a quantifiable case for trails (alone and with transit) as a voluntary alternative to reduce auto trips and GHG emissions.

- Provide a case-study that could be exported to other communities.

Data and report will be available early 2016.

We have reached out to the following collaborators so far...please forward to anyone else who may be interested in this project!

Silicon Valley Leadership Group, SPUR, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Greenbelt Alliance, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, Silicon Valley Mountain Bikers, Save Our Trails, California Walks, Friends of the Five Wounds Trail, SJSU Mineta Transportation Institute, Peninsula Open Space Trust



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